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Introduction

Thank you, as always, for a kind and generous introduction. Admiral Rondeau, thank you for your leadership of this remarkable institution. It is my honor, ladies and gentlemen, to address this distinguished audience.

As it is every time that I have the opportunity to come to NDU, I appreciate getting to spend time with national security professionals who have distinguished themselves in their careers, and are on their way to being senior officers and executives of our military and U.S. Government agencies. Do not underestimate how instrumental your leadership and commitment will be as we continue to address the many challenges that are arrayed before us—challenges that make me even more appreciate your efforts here, and those of Admiral Rondeau and the NDU staff and faculty. The academic and professional rigor for which NDU is known will help to prepare you for these greater responsibilities.

I also thank our colleagues from allied and partner nations, with which we enjoy productive collaboration to address shared challenges and work ultimately toward common solutions.

Geostrategic Ambiguity and Fiscal Austerity

Achieving enduring stability, however, will continue to be a daunting challenge, because the world remains a very unpredictable place, influenced by multiple actors with overlapping interests. As these various actors pursue a variety of agendas, technology continues to enable them—both state and non-state, and both friendly and adversarial.

And, as technology and explosive computing power are creating conditions for change at an unprecedented rate, we must also contend with a constantly accelerating environment and events with which we must deal simultaneously: North Korean misbehavior, Israeli forest fires, an Afghan strategy assessment, New START ratification, and serious domestic concerns as well—in just the last ten days alone. And, we remain in a period of economic uncertainty as we work to emerge



from a worldwide downturn, and compensate for decreased defense purchasing power and related resourcing challenges.

In short, stability is threatened by rising and potentially aggressive actors around the world, and by technology that enables them with previously unattainable advanced capabilities—from communications to supercomputing, and from non-kinetic methods of influence to highly capable weapon systems. Some of these capabilities and systems can be networked and utilized to preserve a potential aggressor's initiative, while denying access and freedom of action to others. Anti-access capabilities, especially when coupled with strategies that exploit them, can present a real challenge not only to U.S. and allied regional influence, but also to the interlinked system that is the basis of peaceful global trade, communication, and transportation. Along with the increased competition for limited domestic resources, all of this challenges us to work together—more jointly and more efficiently—to more effectively counteract these potential threats.

Cross-Domain Control and Freedom of Action

To prevail in this uncertain environment, we must maintain, at a minimum, the ability to transit key areas of the global commons and access regions wherever our national interests may lie. Over the last several decades, the U.S. military has developed and maintained an unrivaled ability to establish and maintain air superiority and sea control—and therefore, freedom of access and action practically worldwide. We have been so successful that our ability to project expeditionary power from the United States, our access to forward bases, and our mobility throughout potential battle spaces has remained largely unchallenged.

But this advantage is being threatened, as potential adversaries have responded with strategies and investments in technical capabilities, specifically designed to challenge our access to, and ability to maneuver in, areas where we have national interests. Through these calculated pursuits, the relatively permissive operating environment that we have helped to establish could diminish. With the evolution of these anti-access and area-denial capabilities—and because our friends and allies will continue to look to us for collective security—we must ensure that we maintain both access to and freedom of maneuver in these



increasingly contested environments and networks. Otherwise, we will face having to operate with greater risk, or to create effects from greater distances than we would operationally prefer—either of which puts us in a less advantaged position. If allowed to proliferate unabated, anti-access and area-denial strategies and associated capabilities could adversely affect global security.

Overcoming anti-access and area-denial measures requires a big-picture perspective—one that addresses multiple domains in an integrated fashion. Our challenge is, within fiscal constraints, to address the ability of potential adversaries to oppose our expeditionary power projection capabilities—in particular, in the vicinity of key trade routes, consistent with basing strategies, and around lines of communications, which are critical not only for our commercial interests and the global economy as a whole, but also to our ability to respond to a crisis anywhere around the world. This is not about just the Navy and the Air Force—or about just the U.S. military alone, for that matter—but about full-spectrum access and freedom of action to enable our Nation’s collective, multi-dimensional ability to pursue and promote our vital interests around the world.

So, as the Air Force provides control of the air and space over wherever friendly forces must operate, it does so with the awareness of the need for assured access to, and movement across, the maritime and cyber domains, and in specific portions of the land domain. We all must be cognizant that while indeed, operating domains are still distinct, they are also increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Therefore, so must be our response to any anti-access or area-denial challenge—a response that is shaped by the certainty that our ability to operate in any single domain relies on a substantial level of control in the others. A level of timely, seamless, and integrated control over multiple domains, even when localized, has become a prerequisite for military success wherever we may be called upon to serve.

Air-Sea Battle

To address these challenges, we cannot just invest in expensive, technologically elaborate, and service-centric capabilities or materiel solutions. Because of budgetary constraints for the foreseeable future, the rapid expansion and proliferation of advanced technology and weapon systems, and the anti-access and



area-denial strategies that those weapons underwrite, we face a reality requiring more disciplined spending, efficiency, innovation, and inter-service integration and interoperability.

For instance, Secretary Gates has directed efficiency initiatives to effectively create two to three percent budgetary growth, and directly apply them to operational requirements. In doing so, we will shift scarce resources from overhead and administration to modernizing or recapitalizing our systems, and enhancing our warfighting capabilities.

Other pursuits to find efficiencies emphasize maximizing institutional and operational architectures, such as an initiating concept called “Air-Sea Battle,” on which Admiral Gary Roughead, General Jim Amos, and I have been working in order to create an enduring partnership between the Nation’s air and sea services. Instead of an *ad hoc* or temporary arrangement, we are looking to establish a more permanent, more strategic relationship in three dimensions:

- *institutionally*, with changes in service cultures and organizational structures to normalize collaborative behavior and processes;
- *conceptually*, with institutional agreement on how air and sea forces and assets will integrate and interoperate; and
- *materially*, with current systems that are compatible, or at least interoperable, and with integrated acquisition strategies, all focused on required future Joint systems and capabilities.

It is important to evaluate the potential of this endeavor holistically, as this initiating concept will drive how we define future development and how we eventually derive subordinate concepts for maneuver of integrated air and naval assets. With this understanding, we will expand upon current Joint doctrine, organizations, and training; integrate weapon systems toward increased interoperability and resiliency; and link distinct command and control networks toward increased connectivity and seamlessness.

So, for example, under Air-Sea Battle, our services will work together to establish more integrated joint exercises against more realistic threats, including operating with less-than-optimal network and geo-positioning data transfer availability. During these exercises, Airmen and Sailors will integrate the operations



of stealthy submarines and aircraft to achieve enhanced effects, thereby increasing the survivability of the total force. Weapons integration will be akin to our efforts in the early 1980s, when, despite initially resisting, the Air Force incorporated longer-range Harpoon anti-ship missiles on B-52 aircraft, for the maritime attack mission to address the rapid advancement of Soviet sea-based air defense capability. One of the Air Force's most enduring core contributions—global intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance—can be further developed to contribute to Air-Sea Battle, by innovating and assuring the reliable delivery of full-motion ISR video from Air Force remotely-piloted aircraft to Navy ships when they are transiting high-threat regions, thereby diminishing risk and sustaining local freedom of movement on the sea. Materially—instead of separate, service-independent, and competing acquisition programs—we will instead work cohesively through integrated acquisition strategies toward inter-service interoperability and redundancies that are deliberate and appropriate, not fortuitous or needlessly duplicative. And, as Air-Sea Battle develops, we will look for opportunities to collaborate with allies and partners on applicable elements, to ensure integrated and effective coalition force operations wherever we are called-upon to act.

But, at its core, no matter how this emerging concept develops, the success of Air-Sea Battle will hinge on the skill and ingenuity of our people, and long-term commitment of our respective institutions. In short, Air-Sea Battle is neither a one-dimensional concept nor a specific operations plan; nor is it intended to address any one particular adversary or theater. Rather, it is an initiating concept with a long view of any number of security situations that could contest our access to operating areas and networks, or challenge us across the spectrum of conflict—whether lower-end, higher-end, or hybrid.

I appreciate that this may appear to be nothing novel. Indeed, I am aware that many of you in this room have collaborated in ways that are similar to what I have described here. What is original about Air-Sea Battle—and again, to reiterate—is the service-level, institutional commitment, toward agreement on: (1) *institutional structures* that normalize air-sea collaboration; (2) *organizing concepts* that comprise a strategic framework on the enhanced and permanent integration of Navy and Air



Force assets, including elements of doctrine, training, leadership, and personnel; and (3) *material interoperability*, including integrated acquisition strategies toward enhanced joint capabilities.

Finally, I emphasize that Air-Sea Battle—unlike previous and even ongoing and current Navy, Marine, and Air Force collaboration—is about maintaining and improving U.S. expeditionary power projection capability. If we are not producing this specific result through strengthening current Navy, Marine, and Air Force collaboration, then it is not Air-Sea Battle.

Conclusion: Vision, Innovation, and Leadership

For this to work, Air-Sea Battle must outlast the personalities that conceived and are developing the initiating construct. What I have suggested here must be inculcated into our Joint culture, with an extended view of the future threat environment. Given fiscal constraints that may limit our strategic options, rising to these challenges will require a firm appreciation of our vision; innovation, along with more disciplined spending and greater efficiency, that will compensate for less robust budgets and purchasing power; and finally, bold and determined leadership that, at times, will call for exploring the unknown or little known, accepting reasonable degrees of risk, and navigating through discomfiting uncertainty.

I mentioned earlier about how we look forward to your continued achievements and distinction in your professional efforts. So, as you continue to sharpen your strategic perspective against the whetstone of academic rigor here at NDU, begin to prepare yourself for even greater roles and responsibilities, including being bigger than where you came from, and acknowledging the power and necessity of collaboration amongst all who strive to secure our Nation's future.

In the meantime, entertain challenges to your long- and close-held beliefs, as Ann Rondeau and Alan Gropman have done for me on numerous occasions these last 40 years or so. Accept some disruption to your comfort zones. Welcome respectful debate and discourse. All of this will help to prepare you for the issues that your Nation will expect you to address. And, it will further develop your understanding of the complexities that you will face, and your appreciation for the



tilt toward pragmatic ideas, such as Air-Sea Battle and other essential collaborative endeavors, that you will help to propel forward.

Thank you again for your valuable time today. I look forward to your questions.